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AUTHOR Filanqieri, Jerry S.
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ABSTRACT

Questionnaires based on those developed by Albert J. Mazurkiewicz for his 1960 study were used in a survey to determine the attitudes of fathers and sons, mothers and daughters, and male and female teachers toward reading as a masculine or feminine activity and to determine if attitudes have changed since the earlier study. A total of 133 seventh grade students, 25 of their parents, and 25 teachers completed the questionnaires. The results showed that 66% of the fathers and 65% of the sons regarded reading as a mostly feminine activity, while 100% of the mothers and 92% of the daughters also regarded reading as a feminine activity. Of the teachers, 100% of the males regarded reading as a masculine activity and 100% of the females regarded it as a feminine activity. The findings indicate that children do have definite attitudes towards reading and that their attitudes reflect those of their parents. The findings do not differ materially from those of Mazurkiewicz's earlier study. (The Parent/Teacher questionnaire is appended.) (FL)

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A SURVEY ON READING AS A HIGHLY MASCULINE OR HIGHLY FEMININE ACTIVITY

BY

JERRY S. FILANGIERI

A Research Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Masters Degree in

Reading Specialization

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ABSTRACT

A study based on the Mazurkiewicz study of 1960 to determine the attitudes of fathers and sons, mothers and daughters; and teachers- male and female, in regards to reading as a masculine or feminine activity was conducted to determine if attitudes have changed in 1978 as compared to 1960.

Results indicated that attitudes in regard to reading as a masculine or feminine activity have not changed much, if any, in 18 years. There was almost complete agreement between the results found in this 1978 study and the Mazurkiewicz results found in 1960.

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ARTICLE I

INTRODUCTION

The attitudes children have when they enter school are usually those which are acquired at home from their parents. The parental role in forming attitudes in their children could play an important part in their development in school. Children tend to reflect their parent's ideas. It would be interesting to find whether there is any difference between the attitudes of parents and children regarding reading as a highly masculine or highly feminine activity.

RELATED LITERATURE

Boys outnumber girls by a four-to-one ratio in the retarded reading population (Mazurkiewicz 1960). A study done by Mazurkiewicz to examine why boys tend to be less able in reading than girls, was an attempt to understand this enigma by investigating some social-cultural factors as possible contributing factors to the retardation in reading found in boys (Mazurkiewicz 1960).

In the study done by Mazurkiewicz both fathers and some sons classified reading as mostly feminine activity.

It was found that the boys who classified reading as a mostly feminine activity tended to be less able readers but that the attitude existed across the range of reading achievement studies.

The study done by Arthur I. Gates in 1961, confirmed that girls are better readers than boys and that boys were less able readers than girls at all IQ levels.

Ralph C. Preston in 1962 compared sex differences in reading achievement in Germany and the United States. Preston found, among other things, that the test scores of the American girls exceeded those of the American boys but that the reverse was true in Germany.

In a later study on sex differences in reading achievement in four English speaking nations, Johnson (1971) found that in England and Nigeria boys did better than girls; however, in Canada and the United States girls did better than boys. Therefore, he concluded, that sex differences in reading ability as measured by the tests appeared to be related to cultural influences (Johnson 1973-74).

The existence of sex differences in reading achievement have been shown by a number of researchers. Studies by Monroe (1932), Samuels (1943), Gates (1961) all have shown significant differences favoring girls.

Johnson gives a major reason why boys tend to do poorer than girls.

Johnson concludes that a majority of American school children don't encounter a male teacher until about the fifth grade, if they are lucky. Because of this, male students preform at a lower level then the girls. It seems plausible that a male student might achieve better in a classroon with a male teacher (Johnson 1973). Johnson also states that in England and Nigeria boys did better than girls; however, a majority of the teachers are male.

Johnson also states another reason which he calls the "Pygmalion" effect; 80% of the Canadian and American teachers judge their girls to be better than boys. Therefore, he noted, children tend to preform as their teachers expect them to.

In all of the studies reviewed the common conclusion is that girls are better readers ~~than~~ boys.

The purpose of this study is to find out if seventh grade children, their parents and their teachers believe reading is highly masculine or highly feminine activity, whether this expressed attitude relates to the students reading achievement, and whether the results obtained in 1978 differs from that found in 1960.

HYPOTHESIS

A. Boys tend to believe that reading is a highly feminine activity and that their fathers tend to believe similarly.

B. The boys' attitude relates significantly to their reading achievement.

C. The results obtained do not differ significantly from that found in 1960.

If the hypothesis is accepted, the strength of this correlation will show how much confidence can be placed in the results and suggest a possible factor for lower achievement. The results will be of interest to educators who can then establish programs to modify this attitude.

RESEARCH PROCEDURES

The questionnaires (Appendix A) used in this research study were based on the original ones developed by Albert J. Mazurkiewicz in his 1960 study. Some modifications of the questions given to the students were made; however, the questionnaires given to the parents and teachers had no modifications.

The sample group consisted of 133 seventh grade male and female students, with an average age of 12-6; 25 teachers, 13 male and 12 female; and 25 parents, 15 male and 10 female.

Each student was asked to fill out a questionnaire. Directions for the questionnaires were fully explained and discussed prior to the handing out of the questionnaires to the students. The questionnaires were then compiled and grouped according to the responses of each of the students.

Each of the teachers volunteered to fill out a questionnaire with the understanding that their names be withheld from the study report. This was agreed to. The questionnaires were completed at a faculty meeting and later tabulated.

During parent-teacher conferences 25 parents also volunteered to fill out a questionnaire, knowing that their children filled out a similar one a few weeks before. Since a replication of the Mazurkiewicz study was being attempted in part, specific constraints in which parents completed the questionnaires were developed. The constraints were that each male student was allowed to have only his father fill out a questionnaire, and each female student was allowed to have only her mother fill out a questionnaire.

After they were completed by the parents, they were then tabulated.

In accordance with the design of this study, the questionnaires totalling 133 for students, 50 for parents and teachers, were reviewed by this researcher and tabulated.

The results were then grouped into 6 sub-groups: mother-daughter; father-son: teachers- male and female.

RESULTS

The results of this study showed that 66% of fathers of children at the seventh grade level regard reading as a mostly feminine activity,whereas, only 33% regard reading as a mostly masculine activity. Table I shows that the sons also regard reading as a highly feminine activity in that 65% identified reading as a highly feminine activity, whereas, 34% identified reading as a highly masculine activity.

The results showed that both fathers and sons have almost the same opinions in labelling reading as a masculine or feminine activity.

TABLE I

RESPONSES OF FATHERS AND SONS TO THEIR ATTITUDE SURVEY ON READING AS A HIGHLY MASCULINE OR HIGHLY FEMININE ACTIVITY

		Number	%
FATHERS	Mostly Masculine	5	33
	Mostly Feminine	10	66
SONS	Mostly Masculine	25	34
	Mostly Feminine	48	65

Table II shows the complete agreement between mothers and daughters attitudes towards reading.

The mothers that were involved in this study were in complete agreement. 100% regard reading as a mostly feminine activity, whereas, 92% of the daughters also regard reading as a mostly feminine activity, and only 8% regard reading as a mostly masculine activity.

The results showed that both mothers and daughters have almost the same opinions in labelling reading as a feminine activity.

TABLE II

RESPONSES OF MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS TO THEIR ATTITUDE SURVEY ON READING AS A HIGHLY MASCULINE OR HIGHLY FEMININE ACTIVITY

		Number	%
MOTHERS	Mostly Masculine	0	0
	Mostly Feminine	10	100
DAUGHTERS	Mostly Masculine	5	8
	Mostly Feminine	55	92

Table III shows the results of the teacher survey.

In reference to the teachers the results were split according to their sex; 100% of the male teachers regard reading as a masculine activity, whereas, 0% regard reading as a feminine activity. The same was true of the female teachers; 100% of the female teachers regard reading as a feminine activity, whereas, 0% regard reading as a masculine activity.

TABLE III

RESPONSES OF MALE AND FEMALE TEACHERS TO THEIR ATTITUDE SURVEY ON READING AS A HIGHLY MASCULINE OR HIGHLY FEMININE ACTIVITY

		Number	%
TEACHERS- MALE	Mostly Masculine	13	100
	Mostly Feminine	0	0
TEACHERS- FEMALE	Mostly Masculine	0	0
	Mostly Feminine	12	100

CONCLUSIONS

It may be concluded that the children in this study do have definite attitudes towards reading, and that this attitude appears to be related to the attitude of their parents.

It may also be concluded that the results obtained in this 1978 study do not differ materially from the results found by Mazurkiewicz in 1960. A majority of the boys believe reading is a highly feminine activity. Their fathers believe the same. This then can be viewed as a major cause of why boys tend to be poorer in reading than girls. Other studies, referred to earlier, have found that environment, culture, and maturation have an affect on attitudes in reading.

Because this study is in virtual agreement with the Mazurkiewicz study in 1960, it can be concluded that attitudes towards or about reading have not changed much, if any, in 18 years. The same attitudes that were being reported in 1960 are still being echoed in 1978. It, therefore, leaves us with the question; "where have we gone in 18 years ?"

It would be wise to realize that children do come to school with attitudes, and that measures should be built into the reading program to establish correct attitudes so that the child can proceed in a direction of progress in reading.

It is essential that the flow of materials and movements continue to lead a child to meet his potential regardless of sex.

Because reading is the key to our society, we must continue to establish the right direction, and try to correct this social-cultural influences in our educational institutions. We must remove sex as a basis for judging our reading programs. Where and how we begin is a vital topic for further research.

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Opinionnaire Given to Parents and Teachers

Inventory

Name_____

Sex_____

Occupation_____

Schooling Completed: 1,2,3,4,5,
6,7,8,9,10,
11,12
College
1,2,3,4,5,6

Both men and women participate in the activity below. However, some of the activities are associated more with men than with women. This is a sampling of your ideas about which activities are associated with men or women.

Classify the activities below by marking M or F before each activity using the following code. M equals MOSTLY MASCULINE ACTIVITY: F equals MOSTLY FEMININE ACTIVITY. Example: sewing, mountain climbing. Sewing would be placed under a MOSTLY FEMININE ACTIVITY while mountain climbing would be placed under a MOSTLY MASCULINE ACTIVITY. Sewing has an F in front of it; mountain climbing has an M in front of it.

F Sewing
M Mountain Climbing
___ Hiking
___ Swimming
___ Cooking
___ Baseball
___ Football
___ Whittling
___ Fencing
___ Reading
___ Checking Looks in a Mirror
___ Conscious about Clothes
___ Woodwork
___ Carving
___ Painting
___ Singing
___ Dancing
___ Diving
___ Writing

___ Model Boats
___ Playing with Dolls
___ Playing Nurse
___ Tennis
___ Golf
___ Checkers
___ Chess
___ Playing House
___ Housecleaning
___ Studing
___ Jumping Rope
___ Soccer
___ Hockey
___ Climbing Trees
___ Bowling
___ Sculpturing
___ Playing Pool
___ Body Building
___ Playing Bridge